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7.
PRESERVATION OF PAROCHIAL REGISTERS AND
ECCLESIASTICAL DOCUMENTS.

A PAMPHLET

SHEWING THE NECESSITY FOR SOME LEGISLATIVE PROVISION

FOR THE

BETTER CUSTODY AND PRESERVATION

OF

OLD PARISH REGISTERS

AND

DOCUMENTS CONNECTED THEREWITH,

And for affording adequate facilities for ascertaining the genuineness or spuriousness
of such Entries and Documents by Microscopic, Chemical, or other Tests.

KENDAL :
PRINTED BY ATKINSON AND POLLITT,
1878.

written subsequently to the entry on the page on which the substituted entry was made. That in one case a series of entries were scratched or erased out of the register book, and four leaves cut out of such book under circumstances showing that such cutting out must have been recent. That certain marriage bonds, deposited in the registry of the Archdeacon of Richmond and the Bishop's registry at Chester, were pronounced by two independent gentlemen of great experience in deciphering old MSS. to be forgeries, and were professed to be entered into by parties who were conclusively proved to have been dead when the bonds were given.

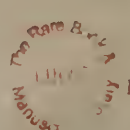
It is impossible, however, to form an adequate notion of the said alleged tamperings and forgeries, or of the importance they may have in frustrating or impeding the course of justice, without a full detail of the facts connected with the said cases, which are as follows :—

On the 13th day of December, 1863, Richard Harrison, late of Warrington, gentleman, died intestate, possessed of considerable real estates in Lancaster and Chester, and having no near relation.

Amongst the papers of the deceased was found what purported to be a copy of the will of John Harrison, of Lea, in the parish of Preston, who died in 1669, and as part of the property in the possession of the intestate at his death was identified by name as a portion of that comprised in the will of the same John Harrison, it was a fair inference that John Harrison, of Lea, was the common ancestor from whom the descent had to be traced.

As the name of "Harrison" was a very common one in the parish of Preston and the adjoining parishes, there were many persons who prosecuted searches with a view to establishing their titles as heir. Amongst these was one Richard Harrison, of Preston. He at first considered that he might possibly be entitled, but further enquiries and searches led him to believe that the descent was to be traced through a less remote ancestor, and he accordingly entered into an arrangement with Ann Mayor, Ellen Porter, and Nicholas Nickson, for transferring to them the information he had obtained by his searches and to continue his searches on their behalf.

In the year 1866 commissioners of escheat, under the seal of the Duchy and County Palatine of Lancaster, were appointed, and by an inquisition taken on the 3rd of December it was found by the jury that the said Richard Harrison died on the 13th of December, 1863, intestate, without known heirs, and that his lands and hereditaments in Lancashire had escheated to Her Majesty in right of the said Duchy.



Several claimants to the heirship appeared before the commissioners, but no evidence was given by such persons on the suggestion of the commissioners, that by submitting to a verdict in favour of the Duchy, the claims of the parties could be investigated at less trouble and expense than would attend hostile proceedings in ejectment against the tenants.

Some two or three years after the taking of the inquisition the plaintiffs received information from the Duchy that their claim had not been established, but could obtain no information as to the grounds of objection to such claim, and they accordingly were under the necessity of traversing the inquisition, the trial of which traverse came before Mr. Justice Denman and a jury on the 24th of June, 1873.

The plaintiff's title was derived through Ellen and Margery, the daughters of Lawrence Harrison (who was the fifth son of the above mentioned John Harrison, of Lea), by Frances his wife, formerly Frances Maudsley.

In the course of the trial, and after the evidence of the plaintiffs had been nearly wholly completed, the Attorney-General for the Duchy produced a certificate, dated in 1866, under the hand of the Vicar of Kirkham, of an entry in the register of the 21st of March, 1685, of the baptisms of "Ellen and Margery, the daughters of Frances Maudesley, of Ingol, spinster," which entry, if valid, would necessarily have defeated the plaintiffs' claim.

The plaintiffs were taken by surprise at the production of this certificate, as the register had been most carefully searched, and the Attorney-General of the Duchy admitted that he had never before heard of such an entry. The certificate was in fact produced by an adverse claimant, who had withheld all knowledge of it from the Duchy, and the plaintiffs were in consequence driven to withdraw the case from the jury and to submit to the decision of an arbitrator.

Upon a careful examination of the register at Kirkham it was found, and adduced in evidence before the arbitrator, that the entry in question was written, or nearly so, upon an erasure, that the entry was smeared with grease both on the front and back, and that the entries for several lines above and below were touched up with a different coloured ink from that of the other entries in the book. On an examination of the transcript of the parish register deposited at Lancaster the whole, or by far the greater portion, of the entry was found to be written on an erasure, and the entries above and below were touched up with a different coloured ink from the other entries in

the transcript, in a similar manner to the parish register, and that the back of the parchment was scraped, both above and below the entry, so as by reducing that portion of the page to an uniform thickness, to render it difficult for any one looking at the front of the skin readily to detect the line of erasure, and the remains of old writing could be seen in juxta position with the erasure, which appeared to have formed part of a previous obliterated entry.

On the hearing before the arbitrator, the evidence of Edward Peacock, Esquire, of Bottesford Manor, Brigg, Lincolnshire, a gentleman of great experience as an antiquarian, and a justice of the peace for the county of Lincoln, and Mr. W. E. Turner, of the MSS. department of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, was that, in their opinion, the handwriting of the entry in the original register and transcript was not the same as that of the preceding entries, and both these gentlemen expressed a confident opinion that the handwriting is modern and not in the style or character of the period, though intended as an imitation. It is also remarkable that the word "spinster" cannot be found in any entry throughout any of the registers, but illegitimacy was invariably denoted by the letter B. prefixed to the entry. In this case the letter B. was prefixed to the entry in question, but was different in formation from the other B.'s in the book.

Although previously to the trial careful search had been made for entries of the marriage of Lawrence Harrison with Frances, his wife, and of the baptisms of their two daughters, and a reward offered for information as to such entries, no trace of them could be found, and the plaintiffs' proof of the marriage and legitimacy of the children consisted of the production of the wills of Lawrence Harrison and Frances, his wife. In the former of which Lawrence gave one-third of his property to "his loving wife Frances," and the remaining two-thirds to his daughters Ellen and Margery; and Frances, who describes herself as a widow, bequeaths her property to her two daughters Ellen Harrison and Margery Harrison, and appoints her brother Robert Mawdesley and John Harrison, of Lea, executors of her will.

On a careful examination of the registers of the parish of Preston, it was found that the entries for nearly two years, extending from December, 1687, to September, 1689, had been cut out, and from the clean appearance of the cut, which was so deep as to pierce the adjoining page, as well as from the whiteness of the string which kept together the pages at the point where the skin was removed, the cutting must have been recent. It was also discovered that after the

heading in February, 1681, two or three lines of the register had been erased by rubbing or scraping, and that marks of portions of previous entries remained visible on the erased portions.

Subsequently to the trial, and pending the enquiry before the arbitrator, several more extraordinary instances of gross tampering with parish registers were discovered, in order to explain which it becomes needful to refer to a portion of the plaintiffs' pedigree.

The descent was originally traced from the above-mentioned John Harrison, of Lea, who married Margery Brown, on the 27th February, 1635, and was buried at Preston on the 4th of April, 1669. He left five sons (namely) John, Richard, William, James, and Lawrence, and two daughters, Ellen and Isabel, all of whom are mentioned in his will.

It was necessary, in order to establish a title through Lawrence, to prove the failure of issue of John, Richard, William, and James. The failure of issue of John was admitted or sufficiently proved by documentary evidence, and that of William and James proved by their wills, by which their properties were given to collaterals.

The difficulty remained with regard to Richard. The only evidence the plaintiffs could originally obtain was an entry in the register of burials for the parish of Preston, of the 27th of January, 1670, of "Richard, son of Widder Harrison, of Lea," coupled with the fact of the name of Richard being mentioned in the will of his father, who died in 1669, and unnoticed in that of his mother, which was dated the 23rd of May, 1672.

The person who searched on behalf of the plaintiffs treated the word "widder" as meaning widow, as no entry in any of the registers of the death of the child of a widower had been discovered nor heard of. On the hearing before the arbitrator, however, it was contended that the word meant widower, and, to give colour to such contention, an entry was referred to in the parish register of Poulton of the baptism, on the 10th of November, 1668, of Richard, son of John Harrison, of Lea, whose mother was three days afterwards buried at Preston, and the entry of Richard, son of Widder Harrison, of Lea, was sought to be referred to the death of this child. Upon a reference, however, to the parish register of Poulton it was found that the entry in question was a manifest forgery, having been written with a pigment of a different colour from the other entries. The entry was on the left-hand side of the page, and a portion of the pigment overlaid the entries on the right-hand side of the page which had been written subsequently to those on the left-hand side of the page. The plaintiffs then procured

Professor Attfield, of the Pharmaceutical Society of London, and Mr. Coppock, of the firm of Messrs. Smith, Beck, and Co., opticians, of Cornhill, carefully to examine the entry of the death of "Richard, son of Widder Harrison, of Lea," the former of whom reported that the word "Widder" and the following letter "H" were written with a fluid the pigment of which was reddish brown and different in shade from the brown colour of the other entries, whilst Mr. Coppock was enabled to report positively that the surface of the parchment on which the above word and letter were written had been previously removed.

Mr. Peacock and Mr. Turner also deposed that, in their opinion, the letters "er" at the end of "Widder" were a spurious addition to the entry, and that the mode of interpolation by double dots was unknown in ancient documents, and indicated modern tampering with the entry.

Previously to the trial letters of administration to the effects of Richard, the son of Widow Harrison, of Lea, were found to have been granted on the 21st of March, 1670, to his brother John Harrison, and from the inventory which accompanied the grant of administration it appeared that the deceased was an adult, and must have died a bachelor. This in itself was strong proof of the falsification of the entry, but the proof was rendered conclusive by a reference to the court rolls of the manor of Lea, hereinafter mentioned.

The apparent object of the above falsification of the register, so far as relates to the death of Richard Harrison appears to have been to show that he did not die in 1670, but survived that period, and afterwards intermarried with one Ellen Fletcher, at Kirkham, in 1671, through whose family one of the claimants sought to establish a title to the escheated property.

To give currency to such conclusion, evidence of the most startling character was imported into the case.

The plaintiffs in the course of their searches were unable to find any entry of the marriage of William, the third son of John and Margery Harrison, but as the will of William shewed that he died without issue the proof of marriage became immaterial. Previously to the trial, however, the plaintiffs were informed that an entry of such marriage would be found in the transcript of the parish registry of Penwortham, in the diocese of Chester, then deposited in the Bishop's Registry at Chester, the parish registry having been destroyed by fire, and applied to the registrar for a certificate of the marriage. This the registrar in the first instance refused to give, on the ground that the validity of the entry was open to question, but afterwards gave a special certificate

setting forth the particulars of the entry. At the same time a copy of the bond required by the canons to be entered into on every marriage by license was furnished to the plaintiffs, and purported to be entered into by William Harrison, of Lea, in the parish of Preston, husbandman, and Richard Harrison, his brother (*ejus frater*), of Westby, in that parish, as his surety, in the penalty of £100, and was witnessed by Richd. Clegge, vicar of Kirkham. It followed, therefore, from the statement of this bond, if true, that Richard Harrison, the son of John and Margery Harrison, was not the Richard Harrison whose death is recorded in 1670, but that he was, at the time of his brother William's marriage, in 1672, residing at Westby.

Upon an examination of the transcript in question, it appeared that the entry of the marriage of William Harrison was coupled with a similar entry of the marriage of Ralph Freckelton, who by the will of William Harrison appeared to be his brother-in-law and a legatee of his residuary estate, and a similar bond was entered into by Ralph Freckleton and William Harrison, as his surety in reference to the marriage of the former.

As before stated the entries of these two marriages are not in the body of the transcript, but are endorsed under the heading "Omissiones in conjugii nuptice," A.D. 167 $\frac{2}{3}$, and are in the following form : —

William Harrison de Lea paro de Preston ætat xxxij et Alice Freckelton paro de Kirkham ætat xvij per Licentiam Vic Clegge Jan^y x^p.

Ralph Freckelton de Freckelton paro de Preston ætat xix et Isabel Harrison paro de Preston ætat xxij per licentiam Vic Clegge Eodem die.

The endorsed entries are open to the following remarks : —

1st. They are in totally different handwriting and different coloured ink from the entries in the body of the transcript, and have the appearance of having been touched up at several times with different coloured ink.

2nd. The initials of the Christian and surnames attached to the endorsed entries differ materially from the initials of the signatures of the minister and churchwardens appended to the transcript.

3rd. The entries are altogether different in form from the entries in the body of the transcript, and in any other of the registers produced in evidence in the case, as they contain a reference to the ages of the parties and to the authority under which the ceremony was performed, which cannot be found in the case of any other registered entries of marriage.

4th. The marriages are stated to have been solemnized in January, whilst the transcript is not made out until after the 26th of March. If these entries had been in the body of the parish register, as they ought to have been (the canons providing that births, marriages, and deaths occurring during any week shall be entered in the register on the succeeding Sunday), it is in the highest degree improbable that six lines would have been omitted by the transcriber.

5th. The marriages in question having been solemnized in a parish where neither of the contracting parties resided, and also out of the Archdeaconry of Richmond, would, though not absolutely void, be clandestine marriages within the Canon Law, and render the parties liable to the penalties attaching to such marriages; and would also subject the officiating minister, and the minister by whom the license was granted, to suspension from office.

The above entries and marriage bonds underwent a critical investigation by Mr. Peacock and Mr. Turner, who both expressed most decided opinions that both the entries in question and the bonds were forgeries.

The grounds on which they formed their conclusions are principally the following, namely:—

1st. The instruments in question were evidently imitations of writings supposed to have been used at the date of 1672, but showed that they could not have been then written.

2nd. That the contractions and accentuations were not those in use at the time when the instruments professed to bear date; that the contractions are not uniform throughout the instruments; and that many of them are meaningless and absurd, and they give numerous examples in support of their opinions. Mr. Turner, in reference to one of these contractions, states that it showed such evident ignorance as “must lead any one at all conversant with writing of this date to declare against its genuineness.”

3rd. That both the bonds, including the signatures, as well as the entries in question, were written by the same hand and at the same time.

4th. That neither the fillings up of the bond, nor the signature “Ric Clegge Vicar,” were in the handwriting of Richard Clegge, vicar of Kirkham, having been compared with the genuine handwriting of Mr. Clegge and of his signatures extending over a period of between thirty and forty years.

5th. That the bond entered into by William Harrison and Richard

Harrison does not show the parish in which Richard Harrison the alleged bondsman resided. The word used in the bond is "hujus," but no parish is mentioned to which the word could apply, nor does Clegge in his signature append the name of the parish of which he was vicar, so that the word "hujus" was meaningless. Clegge was, however, vicar of Kirkham; and Westbie was within that parish.

6th. That Ralph Freckelton, being nineteen years of age as stated in the bond relating to his marriage, could not enter into such a bond without the consent of parents or guardians, as required by law.

In addition to the above the following peculiarities are observable :—

1st. The signature of Ralph Freckelton to the marriage bond differs materially from his signature to his will, and to a receipt given by him for the original will of Richard Harrison, of Freckelton.

2nd. Mr. Clegg never put an accent (^) over his c's, which mark is unusual, and yet in the bond, and also in the signature, this mark is made.

3rd. The bonds are stated to have been given to the Bishop of Chester and the Archdeacon of Richmond. The Archdeacon of Richmond, however, had no jurisdiction within the parish where the marriage was solemnized, and a license granted by him under his authority would have been void under the 101st canon.

4th. The bond did not contain the condition imperatively required to be inserted in such bonds by the 101st canon (namely) "That the parties should celebrate the marriage publicly in the parish church or chapel where one of them resides, and in no other place." Not only was there no such condition inserted in the bonds, but the parties were married in the church of a parish where neither of them resided.

5th. The 101st canon provides that "no license shall be granted but unto such as shall be of good state and quality. Both Ralph Freckelton and William Harrison are described in the bond as husbandmen, and as the latter by his will bequeaths his best coat and breeches to his *fellow-servant*, it is difficult to conceive that he would have been regarded in 1672 as a person of state and quality to whom a license to marry would have been granted, and as it appears by his will that the highest pecuniary legacy thereby bequeathed was forty shillings, he would hardly have been regarded by the vicar of his parish as a person whose bond for £100 could be safely accepted.

Subsequently to the trial, and during the hearing before the arbitrator, access was obtained to the court rolls of the manor of Lea, which

afforded the most conclusive proof of Richard Harrison, the son of John and Margery and brother of William, having died previously to 1671, and therefore could not have been surety for his brother William in 1672.

To understand the effect of the court rolls it is necessary to premise that John Harrison, the elder, by his will devised three closes called Darginsons Crofts, held upon lease for lives, to his son Richard and the heirs of his body, and, in default of such issue to his son William and the heirs of his body, with like remainder over to his sons James and Lawrence in succession.

On the death of John Harrison, the elder, Richard was entered on the rolls as tenant of the leaseholds, and at a court held for the manor, on the 3rd of May, 1671, the jury presented that there were three crofts in Lea called Darginsons Crofts which were in the possession of Richard Harrison deceased, and there was then no one entered tenant for them, and found that William Harrison was the right owner of the said crofts, and ordered the said William to come and enter himself tenant and do suit and service for the same. It appears therefore not only that Richard was dead at the time of the alleged marriage of his brother William, but that William was then in possession of the property devised to Richard under the will of his father.

An attempt was made by the Duchy to shew that Richard Harrison, the son of John and Margery, was married to one Ellen Fletcher, at Kirkham, in 1671, and had several children by her. The evidence adduced in support of this fact was first a certificate of the entry of the marriage in the parish register at Kirkham on the 12th of October, 1671, and secondly a marriage bond executed on the occasion of the marriage.

The entry in the parish register was as follows:—"Richard Harrison and Ellen Fletcher de Westby." The entry therefore imports a marriage between two persons both residing in the parish of Kirkham, as whenever one of the parties resided out of the parish where the ceremony was performed the address of such person was invariably inserted in the register. By the bond, however, Richard Harrison is described as of Lea, in the parish of Preston, which is at variance with the entry in the register. Mr. Turner, in his evidence before the arbitrator, gave it as his decided opinion that the bond was a forgery, and was marked by the same peculiarities as the Chester bonds before referred to, and was written by the same person who wrote those bonds.

Upon inquiry, it turned out that Richard Harrison who married Ellen Fletcher was the son of William Harrison, of Westby, who by his will, dated the 15th of January, 1680, bequeathed legacies to his grandchildren, the children of his son Richard, by name, which names correspond with the registered entries of the baptisms of the children of Richard and Ellen Harrison, of Westby, born before the death of William, the father, besides which the court tolls of the manor of Lea clearly proved that Richard Harrison, of Lea, died previously to this marriage.

There are circumstances connected with the above bond to which it is necessary to refer.

The plaintiffs' solicitor received a copy of the bond from the Duchy, and on proceeding to Lancaster to examine the same with the original, was informed by the registrar's clerk that the same had been mislaid and could not be found, but subsequently he was informed that the original had been found, and the same was then carefully examined by Mr. Turner.

On further enquiries made of the registrar's clerk subsequently to the conclusion of the case, he stated that the bonds and duplicates of the registers were lying loose in a room which was seldom frequented by the clerks, that there was no difficulty in any of the documents being abstracted from the office, taken away or altered in any shape, and brought back again and placed with other papers, or if it suited the parties they might destroy them altogether, as the clerks were not paid for looking after them, and that any person desirous of examining the bonds and transcripts might be left alone with them for any length of time.

The clerk states that the above bond was brought to him by the person who produced at the trial the certificate of the marriage of Ellen and Margery, daughters of Frances Mawdsley, spinster, and that he made a copy at the dictation of such person, as he did not sufficiently understand Latin. That after the bond was copied, the clerk thinking it might be required at a future time locked it up in his desk, and shortly afterwards the Probate Office was broken into and several desks forced open, and it is not improbable that the above bond disappeared from the clerk's desk, and although several searches were made for the bond it could not be found for a length of time, and ultimately it was found on a table in one of the rooms by a person sent to examine it on behalf of the Duchy.

Evidence was adduced before the arbitrator to shew that some portion

of the tampering had been effected since the death of the testator, and after searches had been made on behalf of the plaintiff. It is material to observe that if the two daughters of Lawrence Harrison were illegitimate, the person to inherit would be the descendants of Ellen Harrison and Isabel Harrison, the two daughters of John Harrison, the father, the former of whom married, or is alleged to have married, Henry Barton, and the latter of whom is alleged to have married one Thomas Weeton. It appeared from the evidence of Mr. Richard Harrison, who prosecuted searches on the part of the plaintiffs, that on searching the parish register of Preston he fell upon an entry dated 5th of February, 1682, of the marriage of Isabel Harrison with Thomas Weeton. He copied the entry into his memorandum book and inserted a reference to it in the pedigree first sent in by him to the Duchy.

Upon subsequently searching the register he found that an entry had been obliterated by rubbing or scraping, and on referring to his book he discovered to his surprise that it was the entry he had noted down on the former occasion, and on a later search he found that the portion of the book containing the entry (which was on the top of the page) had been cut out. In the course of further searches he found an entry of this marriage in the same register book as having been solemnized on the 5th of February, 1680. Upon an examination by Mr. Peacock and Professor Attfeld of this entry, it appeared on the last line but one of the page and was preceded by an entry of the marriage of "Thomas Whitacre, of the Castle Parish, in Clithero, and Janet Hatch, of Preston," and was followed by an entry of the marriage of "John Preston and Catherine Blacoe, of Preston." The entry in question and the succeeding entry were in faint ink, quite different in colour from the previous entries, and traces of former writing were visible. The transcript was then examined, when it appeared that the previous entry comprised a line and a quarter of the transcript, and that the words "Hatch, of Preston," (occupying a quarter of a line) were erased, and the entry in question was then written on this line, and the word "Hatch" interlined by a caret on the preceding line instead of the words "Hatch, of Preston," so that by the omission of "of Preston" the entry in the transcript did not correspond with that in the parish register.

Mr. Peacock in his report says the whole is in light ink and must have been written after a crease was made, which would not be there when the duplicate was made, and that the whole of this line, and the one above it, had been touched up. No entry of the marriage in 1682, which was cut out of the parish register, appears in the transcript, but if

this entry was itself a forgery (as in all probability it was) it would not be there. The transcript also does not contain any entry of the marriage of John Jackson with Catherine Blacoe, which immediately follows the entry in question in the parish register.

Notwithstanding the strong evidence of tampering and forgery above referred to, the arbitrator found that the entry of the burial of "Richard son of Widder Harrison of Lea," the entry in the register for the parish of Kirkham of the baptism of "Ellen and Margery daughters of Frances Maudsley of Ingol Spinster," and the entries in the transcript of the register of Penwortham, deposited at Chester, of the marriage of William Harrison with Alice Freckelton, were genuine entries, and that the marriage bond entered into on the marriage of William Harrison, and deposited at Chester, and the bond entered into on the marriage of Richard Harrison and Ellen Fletcher, of Wesby, were genuine bonds, and the finding of the arbitrator precluded the plaintiff from getting the peculiarities of the tamperings before the court.

Since the arbitrator completed his award searches were made in the parish registers of Preston, Kirkham, Poulton, and Lytham, and the transcripts at Lancaster, and it was found that no less than between thirty and forty entries, connected with the family of Harrison, had been tampered with or fraudulently inserted in the said registers and transcripts, in some of which cases entries in the parish register did not appear in the transcript, whilst in other cases entries in the transcripts did not appear on the face of the parish register.

Allusion has already been made to the loose manner in which the transcripts and marriage bonds are kept at Lancaster, and as to the facility afforded to persons of obtaining sole access to the same.

The mode in which the old parish registers are kept is scarcely less open to objection. These registers are generally permitted to remain in the custody of the parish clerks or their families. In one case such registers were in the possession of a woman at the death of the intestate, and the registers have been allowed to remain in the possession of parties desirous of searching the same without any one else being present. In one case where the parish registers was kept in the church, persons wishing to search them were allowed to have the same brought into the butler's pantry of the vicarage, and to remain in the sole possession thereof for a considerable period. It cannot, therefore, be a matter of surprise that the entries in the registers should have been tampered with or destroyed.

Great obstacles were thrown in the way of a microscopic examination

of the said registers and bonds, and the testing the genuineness or spuriousness thereof by the application of chemical tests, which would have been conclusive, was disallowed.

Considering the great importance of old parish registers and documents connected therewith in deducing the title to estates and honors, it is to the interest of the public that a parliamentary enquiry should be made into the state of the old registers of the above-mentioned parishes, and the transcripts thereof and the documents in connection therewith, and if it should appear on enquiry that the registers and transcripts and the documents connected therewith have recently been tampered with, mutilated, and forged, every effort should be made for providing generally for the better custody and protection of old parish registers and transcripts and the documents connected therewith, and for facilitating the testing of the genuineness thereof by microscopic, chemical, or other tests.

The above statement of facts can, if required, be verified by the solicitor and one of the counsel engaged in the above-mentioned action.

THE following is a SCHEDULE of DOUBTFUL and SUSPICIOUS ENTRIES in relation to Parties connected with the FAMILY of the HARRISONS, of LEA, not noticed in the body of the above Statement : —

**PARISH OF
PRESTON.**

These entries are both inserted out of the ordinary course and at the end of the months. Both entries are written in a different coloured ink from the other entries, and by a different hand. One or both of these entries are omitted from the duplicate at Lancaster.

1672,
December 18.
Baptism--Elizabeth,
daughter of Henry
Barton, of Lea.
1674,
March 17.
Baptism—William,
son of Henry Barton,
of Lea.

Written upon an erasure ; portions of the erased letters apparently much blacker than the other lines in the page. Parchment dirty ; shews signs of having been rubbed or scraped, and is in a much stiffer hand.

1674,
May 17.
Marriage — John
Harrison and Alice
Carver de Lea.

Words "Robert" and "Thomas Weeton" on erasures ; writing traceable underneath. The letter "T" in Thomas in a different character to the other "T's" in the page, and seems of a very modern form.

1686,
November 28.
Baptism — Robert,
son of Thomas
Weeton, of Lea.

Word "Isabel" altered from some other word.

1690,
April 22.
Baptism — Isabell,
daughter of Thomas
Weeton, of Lea.

Ink of a superficial character and purplish colour, giving less stain to the parchment than the fluid with which other parts of the page are written, and part of the parchment in which entry made discoloured, as if from the action of liquid. In one case an indication of erasure. Letter "B" at the end of the line (meaning baptized) different from other letters "B," and very similar to the "B" in the entry from the Kirkham register.

1648,
May 10.
J. fill. Willi. et
Gracie Harryson de
Lea.

1648,
November.
Grace fill. Willi.
Harrison de Lea.

The characters forming "fill. Willi." purplish, and other characters touched up with ink of the colour used in producing the purplish characters.

1645,
July.
Baptism—Richard,
son of Grace Harri-
son.

The characters of this entry are purplish, the tint being similar to that of the indorsed entries of the Penwortham transcript.

1655,
September 20.
William Harrison
de Hardhorn and
Grace Darginson.

The word "William" formed of purplish brown superficial pigment. The word "Thomas," close by, is of a brown colour, and the colours penetrate the parchment.

PARISH OF KIRKHAM.

1693,
18th
Tho. Isabelle
Weeton Westby.

This entry is in lighter and redder ink than the one above, and in many ways resembles the entry of baptism of "Ellen Margery, daughter of Frances Maudesley, spinster," contended to be a forgery (see paragraph 12 of petition). See "I" in Isabelle, "le" in Mawdesley, and "le" at the end of "Isabelle." (No duplicate for this year at Lancaster.)

1719,
June 16.
Baptism—Robt. F.
Thomas Weeton,
Plumpton, Henry
F. William War-
beck, Freckleton.

The words "Weeton" and "Warbeck" on rough discoloured parchment and apparently on erasures; the ink and writing different to the remainder of the entry. (No transcript at Lancaster for this year.)

1723,
4th of
Burial—Isabel F.
Thomas Weeton,
Plumpton.
5th
Jennett F. Simon
H. Freckleton.

Word "Weeton" on erasure and in different coloured ink from rest of entry; word under "Weeton" so rubbed as to make it illegible. Ink in entries above and below perfectly legible, so that the word below "Weeton" could not have faded through age. Remains of a former entry traceable where "Weeton" written, which is apparently in different handwriting to that in which rest of entry is written.

The transcript at Lancaster of the Kirkham registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials for the year 1723 are on separate pieces of parchment joined together, and the sheet of burials contains the following entry:

4. Issabel Thomas Weeton, Plumpton.
5. Jennet S. Hall, Freckleton.

These two entries are in the same handwriting as

the rest of the sheet, in the same ink and free from erasures. The coincidence may be accounted for by a person first tampering with the parish registers and then fearing detection through comparison with the transcript restoring the former to its original condition, or by an attempt to give currency to other falsified entries by shewing that an entry on an erasure and in different coloured ink from other entries is consistent with an unimpeachable transcript.

These remarks are, however, made upon the assumption that the sheet of burials is genuine; but, inasmuch as the signatures of the vicar and churchwardens which it bears differ, it is thought materially, from those attached to the baptisms and marriages. This sheet is open to the suspicion of being an entire forgery.

This entry appears genuine, but to have been rubbed after it was written to give it its present appearance.

In the transcript at Lancaster for the same year there occurs the following entry:—

26. Issabel ux Thom. Weeton W. C. Westby.

The words "ux," "Thom," "Weeton," and "W. C." are all on erasures. There is an erasure above the entry, and the word "Salthouse" in the entry above Weeton and the word "Weeton" shine as if rubbed with something. The ink of "ux," "Thom," "Weeton," "W. C.," and "Salthouse" is brown. The parchment appears to have been scratched.

This case appears to be the converse of the preceding one, being an instance of an entry, apparently genuine in the parish register, the transcript of which has evidently been tampered with.

The fact of entry in the transcript being tampered with affords grounds for the supposition that the sheet of the transcript containing the entry in the last preceding case may have been entirely fabricated for the purpose of supporting as genuine the falsified entry in the parish register.

The surface of nearly all this portion of the parchment has been disturbed. The entry is at the bottom of a page, apparently in different coloured ink and in different handwriting to the other entries, and seems

1722,
July 26.
Burial—Isabel ux.
Thomas Weeton
Westby.

1725.
May 7.
Burial—Thomas
Weeton, Westby.

**PARISH OF
POULTON-LE-
FYLDE.**

1660,

February.

Robte, the sonne of
Richard Harrison,
of Little Marton,
bapt. xviith.

to resemble the Weeton entries in the Preston register. *This entry does not appear at all in the transcript at Lancaster, although the entries above and below follow in order.*

The word "Robte" and the Christian name in the next entry are written on erasures in different ink and in quite a different hand. The "R" is of a much more modern form than those in the entries not tampered with.

1668,

November.

Richard, sonne of
Joh. Harrison, of
Lea, Preston Parish,
crisned x. day.

See comments on this entry, paragraph 24 of this petition.

1656,

May.

Balye, sonn of
William Harrison,
of Lea, was buried
the xvi. day.

This and the three preceding entries seem to have been touched up — they are much darker. Some of the letters have double lines.

1657,

April.

Ellis, son of Wil-
liam Harrison, of
Lea, was buried
xiii. day.

This and three other entries for this month are written in blacker ink than those for the rest of the month, and cast a shade like that of May, 1656, as if they had been touched up. The paper is also much discoloured, as if something had been smeared over it. This discolouration is on and around the above entry, about three-parts, and extends to the bottom.

1670.

January 20.

Richard, son of
Grace Harrison,
widow.

Different to adjoining entries and in different ink.

1658,

October.

Grace Harrison
buried xxiiith.

Much smeared.

The word "Grace" written with brown ink ; "fil William" purple ink ; adjoining entries touched up.

1659,

January.

William Harrison,
of Lea, within
Preston, was buried
xxth day.

Smeared. A gentleman remarks : — "I have turned over many of the leaves of this book which is on paper, and have seen no smears of this character, except in the case of Harrison's entries.

This entry presents some features as that of Ellis Harrison. Something has been smeared over the

paper, and there are the same appearances as in that one. I very much doubt the authenticity of both entries."

The registers at Poulton are contained in three books. The dates of the entries extend from October, 1592, to January, 1637. Those in book No. 2 commence April, 1654, and end May, 1663. The first marriage in book No. 3 is dated 19th of May, 1664. The next entry on that page is June, 1672, then Jullie, 1672, then follow in different ink and in a different hand three entries followed by one entry in August, 1672. On the next page by another hand, and in different ink, is the entry noted in the margin, dated Maye, 1666 (that is six years prior to the date of the immediately preceding entry), and is followed by an entry of Jullie, 1666, and the entries then appear to go on regularly. The whole of the page on which the marriage of Richard Harrison is written is in one hand writing, and not that of the person who wrote the other entries.

A gentleman remarks concerning this register as follows : — "This register is much mutilated, and in many instances on detached leaves of parchment which makes it difficult to examine. The leaves are muddled together indiscriminately without regard to dates. I have no means of ascertaining the sequence of the entries, nor whether it is a perfect and continuous register. It would be easy for any person to abstract or add a leaf, the book having fallen to pieces. It would require considerable time to put the leaves together according to date and to examine the register so as to be able to form an opinion of its value and to ascertain what entries it really comprises. I merely examined those submitted to me by Mr. Harrison."

This entry has been touched up, the parchment appears to have been wetted, and the ink is of a different colour from the rest of the page. The parchment is much discoloured in a similar manner to the entries in the Poulton register.

1666,
May.
Richard Harrison,
of Berks, within
Wesby, and Alles
Barker (or Barter)
was married xxth
day.

**PARISH OF
LYTHAM,
Lancashire.**

1686,
Feby. 6.
John, the son of
Richard Harrison,
of the Berks,
Westby, was bap-
tized, the 8th of
February, 1686.

1715,
January.
Richard, son of
James Harrison,
bapt. Jan. 14th,
1715.

This entry has been interlined between an entry of December the 26th, 1714, and one of March, the 10th, 1714, and is, therefore, in its wrong place. It is in altogether different coloured ink from the rest of the entries on the page, and the interlineation is quite plain. The handwriting appears to be the same as the rest of the page. A more careful examination of the entry is required.

This entry is not in the duplicate at Lancaster.

1679,
Oct. 2.
Elling, wife of
Willie Harrison, of
Lytham, buried the
iith Oct., 1679.

The words "ii Oct." are on an erasure.

1679,
Feb. 8.
Will Harrison, of
Lytham, buried
Februer the eighth,
1679.

The word "Februer" is much more stoutly written than the rest of the entry and in darker ink. Between the word "the" and "eighth" a word has been erased, and the word "eighth" is in lighter coloured ink than the rest of the entry, so that three different coloured inks have been used.



